

Amendments to the Claims:

The following claims will replace all prior versions of the claims in this application (in the unlikely event that no claims follow herein, the previously pending claims will remain):

1. (Currently Amended) A communication method among participants connected through a network in virtual environments, the method comprising the steps of:

a plurality of senders inputting and transmitting text messages;
a receiver selecting reception and conversion of the text message from a desired sender among the plurality of senders into a speech; and
the receiver converting the text message of the desired sender into the speech, and outputting the speech through a speaker while ~~transmitting/receiving~~ transmitting and receiving the text messages ~~to/from~~ to and from other participants;

wherein the step of selecting reception and conversion of the text message from the desired sender comprises the steps of: selecting an identifier of the sender; determining a virtual voice of the sender; and determining a sound effect by grasping a virtual position of the sender and the sender's surroundings.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 2 ~~1~~, wherein the step of determining the virtual voice of the sender determines the voice to be outputted through the speaker, an accent of the voice, and an intonation of the voice.

4. (Currently Amended) A communication apparatus among participants in virtual environments, comprising:

a text message receiving means for receiving text messages from a plurality of senders;

a phoneme dividing means for dividing the text message received through the text message receiving means into phonemes;

a text-to-speech conversion means for converting by characters the phonemes divided by the phoneme dividing means into a speech; and

a sound effect providing means for providing a music or sound effect to the speech by grasping a virtual position of the sender and the sender's surroundings.

5. (Original) The apparatus as claimed in claim 4, wherein the text-to-speech conversion means includes a speech synthesis means for synthesizing by vocabulary the converted speech.

6. (Original) The apparatus as claimed in claim 4, wherein the sound effect providing means includes a tone generating means for providing a tone, an accent, and an intonation of the speech.

7. (New) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the sound effect is music.

8. (New) A communication method among participants connected through a network in virtual environments, the method comprising:
inputting and transmitting, by a plurality of senders, text messages;
selecting, by a receiver, reception and conversion of the text message from a desired sender among the plurality of senders into a speech; and
converting, by the receiver, the text message of the desired sender into the speech, and outputting the speech through a speaker while transmitting and receiving the text messages to and from other participants.

wherein the step of selecting reception and conversion of the text message from the desired sender comprises: selecting an identifier of the sender; determining a virtual voice of the sender; and determining a sound effect by grasping a virtual position of the sender and the sender's surroundings.

9. (New) The method as claimed in claim 8, wherein the step of determining the virtual voice of the sender includes determining the voice to be outputted through the speaker, an accent of the voice, and an intonation of the voice.

10. (New) The method as claimed in claim 9, wherein the sound effect is music.